

VARIETIES INTERNATIONAL LLC.

P.O. Box 515
Dundee, OR 97115-0515 USA
E-mail Dave@treeconnect.com

TOLL FREE : (800) 421-4001
PHONE : (503) 538-2131
FAX : (503) 538-7616

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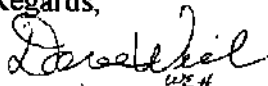
DEAR: Mike Johanns

Our company Varieties International is involved in international variety import and export of plant material with an emphasis on fruit crops including apples, peach, plum, nectarine, apricot, and cherries. We have had a continual challenge working with our industry to import and multiply virus clean plant material. I am writing this memo in support of the "National Clean Plant Network Program" which we feel is critical for the future of our fruit industry in the United States.

Varieties International along with our other companies Tree Connection and Weil Farms are responsible for supplying the industry with over 1.5 million fruit trees. We have first hand knowledge of national need to ship virus certified plants. Our current systems in the United States are not adequate to deal with this every growing challenge of importation, multiplication, and distribution of certified clean plant material to our industry. As our fruit industry becomes more global we see a rapid expansion of new plant material enter our industry from all over the world. The speed of the change in variety demand by the markets has vastly exceeded our capacity to test, and create virus certified sources for the United States fruit growers. If we do not move forward with new variety introduction with virus certified material quickly our industry will slowly fall behind the rest of the world. In fact this is already happening and we are frustrated in being able to receive the latest breeding material from the leading fruit programs around the world. I am currently working with breeding programs all over the world including China and Russia. At this time have been unable to import many of the most interesting items that are available to other growers around the world. When we are fortunate enough to clear the daunting obstacles of quarantine we must wait many years to expand the new plant material in a virus certified way since we have very limited possibilities in the United States to achieve this solution in a reasonable time. The result is that a high percentage of new plant material enters our fruit orchards uncertified. The results are long reaching with reduction of orchard efficiency due to undetected virus in the nursery material at the propagation source. Also it is not possible for the nurseries to export uncertified nursery plants around the world. This mostly limits our markets to inside the United States. This year we will import about 300,000 plants from Holland. I cannot remember exporting any plant loads outside of the United States. Through proper certification we would have the chance to compete with other nurseries on a global basis.

Please consider strongly the testimony of the Northwest Nursery Improvement Institute as presented by Bill Howell concerning the funding of a National Clean Plant Network Program, which we feel is strongly correlated to the future of the tree fruit and grapevine industry in the United States.

Regards,



Dave Weil

Owner: Varieties International. Tree Connection, Weil Farms

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE,
SECRETARIAT, USDA

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but none of the other writers of the book. The book is a collection of essays by a number of writers, and the editor has chosen to include the best of each. The book is a good read, and it is a good example of the kind of writing that can be done in this genre.

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Figure 4

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